

What's up doc?

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

None of this would have been possible without the fantastic resources generously provided by immensely talented emulator authors, and communities such as Hall of Light, Lemon Amiga, Lemon 64, World of Spectrum, Moby Games, World of Longplays and Recorded Amiga Games. Thank you for your tireless dedication to preserving the history of gaming.

In the same year Millennium Interactive approached McVitie's to ascertain the likelihood of them providing the Penguins for their Arctic-set pun-em-up, RoboCod, Nesquik had a stab at turning the ad-tie-in game concept on its head.



The plot thickens!

In 1991 they enlisted the help of developers, Scope, to create a promotional platformer starring their anthropomorphic, cartoony bunny-wabbit mascot, Quiky, to be freely distributed with their fortified milk products I'd imagine. Various sources online suggest it was included with Nesquik breakfast cereal, though someone must have their wires crossed since this didn't hit the market until 1999, "turning the milk chocolatey" to the delight of sweet-toothed ickle kiddiewinkles all over the globe. Bless 'em.

Tricky Quiky Games (taglined: 'Die Suche nach den Verschollenen Seiten', or 'The search for the missing pages')

was released for the Amiga and DOS, and only for the German market, which goes a long way to explaining why the text is all scribed in some wacky alien language. Luckily, armed with my ancient GCSE-level knowledge of German I was able to decipher the complex, meandering plot.

With a deep breath, into the breach we go... a crazy doctor has stolen the Nesquik recipe book and sloped off skyward in his helicopter. Playing as Quiky (though not the Thunder Rabbit), the onus is on you to retrieve the loose pages that have somehow become detached from said tome and scattered across the various landscapes in which the platforming action takes place.



Whatever dastardly scheme the lunatic had in mind is anyone's guess since this isn't expounded. Mine is that he intended to reproduce the Nesquik range of goodies, and force-feed them to the unsuspecting public, thereby wiping out the populace with a terminal diabetes epidemic. I'm not entirely sure how this differs to what the manufacturers themselves are doing yet, I'll flesh out the bones later.

It was coded by N. Strohlein, the graphics were the endeavour of Ralph Finke, and J. Schmonsees took charge of the happnin' toons. Of the three, only the graphician appears to have been credited in other games; Volleyball Simulator and Berlin 1948, both developed by Time Warp Productions and published by Rainbow Arts.

For a freebie, it's not too shabby. The sprites are cute, competently drawn and well animated in a style reminiscent of Superfrog, while the landscapes are bright and colourful, framed affably with subtle and befitting gradient backdrops.



The game is split across various themed settings as you'd expect from a platformer of this ilk. You Quik-start your quest in a woodland teeming with insects and toadstools, and later progress to an Egypt-Mexico hybrid featuring rabbit sphinxes, palm trees and skulls. In between there's a warped, vacillating seascape, a snowcapped winter wonderland, and a sci-fi space station.



With each aesthetic switch of surroundings, your wardrobe adapts appropriately, as does the tone of the accompanying soundtrack. The first scales the botty-kicking motherlode; a symphony of preppy woodwind instruments blended with a rocky metal riff. It's simultaneously twee and gnarly if you can imagine that.

There's even some catchy, charming sampled speech: "Quiky ist meine name, ich trink Nesquik!?" Deutsch sprechen oder nein, it doesn't require translation. Does that make Quiky some kind of international envoy?



Playing the Amiga version I mused that someone should snag the memeworthy line and use it in a remix. Low and behold, when I took a peek at the later PC release from 1994, I realised the developers themselves, ARGON Software, had already taken care of it and it forms part of the game's intro.



BeTwixt (Mars *didn't* pay me to say that, honest) the main levels are a number of bonus stages including an overhead maze challenge, forced-scroll sledge section, R-Type-esque sans weapons asteroid dodging exercise, and finally a grab-the-Nesquik-sachet-from-the-rolling-conveyer-belt-em-up. Yep, *that* old chestnut.



Quiky's control mechanism is responsive and tightly coded, collision detection adroitly counterbalanced. Your one and only weapon throughout is a limited supply of balloons that are launched at enemies as projectiles. More can be collected to top up your armoury, along with heart-shaped energy power-ups. Curiously, when you scoop up the latter, Quiky takes a swig of Nesquik from a bottle, and your health is replenished. Why not just design the boosters to look like Nesquik in the first place? Momentous product placement opportunity missed there methinks! You could say it was an 'epic fail', but then 'fail' is a *verb*, not a friggin' noun, and I'd be obliged to come round to your house and water-board you with Nesquik syrup!



Lolloping about the scenery at a leisurely pace isn't an option since you must race against the clock to locate the stolen recipes, though the countdown can be extended by collecting - you guessed it - clocks. Extra lives in the shape of bunny heads can also be foraged along the way to keep you rabbiting.

Aside from the mascot himself, in-game advertising mostly consists of floodlit Nesquik billboards dotted about the levels. It's a small price to pay, and if you don't like it, you can always ask for your money back.

In PC-DOS land, Quiky features more detailed graphics, gradient shading effects and a greater colour count. At the end of each stage you must defeat the nefarious recipe-liberating doctor, temporarily propelling him and his helicopter transport back into orbit. This is a significant deviation from the original Amiga version in which you face no bosses at all. The doctor also has a cameo in the opening precis sequence annexed to the PC adaptation. Congruous to the rest of the game, the speech bubbles are all written in German, though it's easy enough to get the gist without requesting an FCO interpreter. Shakespeare, this ain't.



Quiky concludes upon retrieving the final page of the recipe book, the pay-off being an ad for Nesquik refill pouches.

Quik, someone pass the remote! Presumably with the book safely back in Nestle's possession, they are able to continue dispensing their own accredited brand of sweet death.

Wait just one cotton-pickin' minute. Did we win, or bring people-kind one step closer to eupeptic meltdown? It might have been wiser to track down the recipe book pages and nuke them for the future amelioration of humanity.

If this were the Jerry Springer Show, I'd hazard a guess his 'Final Thought' might be, if you're going to consume junk food, you'd be better off eating a pork pie or slice of chocolate cake rather than slurping fat-free, insta-sugar milkshakes. The fat component will moderate your insulin release, minimise the spike, keeping you satiated for longer. Ancel Keyes has a lot to answer for!

Here endeth today's sermon. Class dismissed. For your homework search Google images for '*Groquik*', the *French/Greek answer to Quiky*. Don't ask.